

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2026

Administrator Bryan Bedford
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington D.C. 20591

Administrator Bedford,

We write to express grave concerns regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) Air Operation’s (“IAO”) deportation flights, which have rapidly expanded under President Trump’s aggressive mass deportation agenda. We remain profoundly opposed to the escalation of immigration enforcement practices that separate families, undermine due process, and inflict lasting harm on communities, and we are alarmed by ICE’s evasion of oversight and accountability related to their air operations. As Members of Congress, it is our duty to carry out oversight of these operations. Given the Federal Aviation Administration’s (“FAA”) overarching responsibility for aviation safety and operations, we urge the agency to work with Congress to hold ICE accountable and ensure transparency and the protection of human safety and dignity on flights.

Since President Trump took office in January 2025, we have seen a drastic increase in ICE’s air operations. From January 20 to December 31, 2025, deportation flights increased by 84 percent compared to the same period in 2024,¹ largely due to IAO’s expansion of subcontracted charter flights carried out by companies such as GlobalX, Eastern Air Express, Avelo Airlines, World Atlantic, Eastern Air, OMNI Air, Kaiser, and Key Lime Air. This intentional shift towards industrialized, large scale deportation through a network of private contractors makes accountability increasingly difficult to enforce. Concerningly, information regarding these flights is nearly impossible to find, which undermines congressional oversight and prevents the public from understanding the scope and conditions of these flights.

Of particular concern are reports that ICE has misused Limiting Aircraft Data Displayed (“LADD”) and related aviation data suppression mechanisms to shield deportation flights from public and congressional scrutiny.² LADD was established to enable private aircraft owners and operators of non-commercial flights to filter their flight data from public display websites.³ ICE’s use of this program to obscure routine government operations and suppress information about deportation flights is out of the scope of this program, and therefore inappropriate and dangerous. Credible reports indicate that individuals have been placed on flights without notice to counsel or family members, effectively disappearing from public view when flights are inappropriately shielded from tracking systems.⁴ Families are left searching for their loved ones, and attorneys are denied meaningful opportunities to intervene, raising serious due process concerns.

These concerns are compounded by numerous accounts of inhumane and inadequate safety conditions on IAO flights, including prolonged restraint, inadequate access to food and water, lack of medical care, and unsanitary

¹ Human Rights First. *ICE Flight Monitor: U.S. Immigration Enforcement Flights Report*. December 2025. https://humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/ICE-Flight-Monitor-US-Immigration-Enforcement-Flights-Report_Dec2025.pdf.

² Associated Press. “ICE Deportation Flights Draw Scrutiny Over Treatment of Migrants.” Accessed April 2, 2026. <https://apnews.com/article/ice-deportation-immigration-flights-f61941d31adf43a6a01cccc720f3bb01>.

³ 49 U.S.C. § 44114. *49 U.S.C. § 44114*.

⁴ “ICE Detention Alexandria Staging Facility,” *The Guardian*, September 12, 2025, [The Guardian article](#).

environments.⁵ According to the 2024 IAO Handbook, “detainees transported by ICE Air aircraft will be fully restrained by the use of Authorized Restraint Devices; i.e., handcuffs, waist chains, leg irons.” The handbook also allows for other restraining equipment, such as “spit masks, mittens, leg braces, cargo straps, the WRAP, etc.”⁶ The WRAP is a full body restraint suit that immobilizes the legs and torso and holds the person in an upright, seated position, which the manufacturer says is intended to be used primarily as a de-escalation device.⁷ However, a report by the Associated Press revealed that people were put in the WRAP as a punishment or intimidation tactic for asking to speak to their attorneys or expressing fear at being deported. This report also found that people were forced to stay in the WRAP for the duration of flights, in some cases for 16 hours.⁸ Former flight attendants who were servicing IAO flights revealed there was no plan or training for evacuating passengers who were restrained. That same report also noted that safety briefings were offered in English, even when the passengers primarily spoke Spanish.

These accounts underscore the urgent need for transparency. Independent organizations track ICE flights by cross-referencing data with public records, as well as communications with attorneys, families, and observations from trusted partner organizations. Investigative journalists uncover information about the conditions onboard by giving flight attendants the opportunity to speak about them under the promise of anonymity. While this work is critically important, it is unacceptable that basic information about government-operated deportation flights must be reconstructed through piecemeal public investigative efforts rather than transparently provided by ICE.

Therefore, we request detailed, written responses to the following questions by June 1, 2026.

IAO’s Use of the LADD System:

1. Please provide a detailed report of all ICE air operations since January 20, 2025, that includes deportation flight origin and destination, date, take-off and landing times, number of passengers on board, and tail numbers. This report should include deportation flights that are carried out by contracted charters, and those exiting and entering the United States airspace. The report should clearly indicate which of these flights had information suppressed under the LADD system or through other means to suppress identification or tracking data disseminated to publicly available flight monitoring sites.
2. Please provide a detailed, written account of ICE’s use of the LADD system since January 20, 2025, particularly for deportation flights and including those conducted by contracted charters. Such report should include all communication with ICE and the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) detailing any actions that increase opacity of these flights.
3. Is the FAA aware of additional methods (besides requests through the LADD system) that ICE is using to increase opacity around deportation flights? Please describe these methods in detail.

Humanitarian Conditions on IAO Flights:

⁵ ProPublica. “Inside ICE Air Deportation Flights.” Accessed April 2, 2026. <https://www.propublica.org/article/inside-ice-air-deportation-flights>.

⁶ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. *ICE Air Operations Handbook*, 2nd ed. February 20, 2024. https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/policy/iceAirOpsHandbookEd2_02202024.pdf.

⁷ Safe Restraints Inc.. “The Wrap Safety Restraint.” Accessed April 2, 2026. <https://www.saferestraints.com/the-wrap-safety-restraint-1-1-1-1-3-1-2-1-1-3-1>.

⁸ Associated Press. “ICE’s Use of Full-Body Restraints During Deportations Raises Concerns Over Inhumane Treatment.” 2025. <https://www.ap.org/news-highlights/spotlights/2025/ices-use-of-full-body-restraints-during-deportations-raises-concerns-over-inhumane-treatment/>.

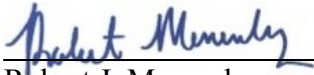
1. Please provide a detailed, written report of FAA's assessment of physical barriers that would slow the evacuation of ICE IAO flights transporting detained individuals during an emergency event.
2. Has the FAA evaluated whether restraining devices such as the WRAP and chains attached to passengers' feet pass crash-worthiness standards? Please provide a detailed, written report outlining the FAA's assessment and testing of such devices. If the FAA has not tested these devices, please provide a written report detailing FAA's plans to test these devices.
3. How does the FAA work with DHS to train ICE officers and flight attendants on proper evacuation and emergency procedures, particularly for flights transporting detained individuals?
4. The 2024 ICE Air Operations Handbook notes that "detainees transported will be fully restrained by the use of handcuffs, waist chains, and leg irons." Yet, FAA regulations do not detail how to evacuate a plane full of passengers whose movements are severely hampered. Please detail the FAA's plans to rectify this issue, including any plans to issue or revise related regulations, standards, or guidance regarding crew training, evacuation procedures, and evacuation instructions to passengers.
5. How is the FAA working with DHS to address language barriers for safety briefings?
6. Please provide information on FAA recommendations, guidelines, and requirements pertaining to the dissemination of passenger instructions on international flights, including deportation flights, including information regarding the dissemination of instructions to non-English speaking passengers.
7. Please provide a detailed, written plan on how FAA intends to hold charter companies such as GlobalX and IAO accountable for reported lack of plans for an evacuation event.⁴ Does FAA plan to investigate these allegations, and will FAA step up oversight of these operators given the potential for increased risk associated with the transport of restrained individuals?
8. How does the FAA respond to reports from flight attendants that describe unsafe conditions on IAO flights, including accounts that detail flight attendants being told that evacuation of detainees is not a priority?
9. Have you received similar reports from flight crews through the Aviation Safety Action Program? Please detail the number of relevant reports received, the concerns reported, and the FAA's response.

ICE's deportation flight program underpins the Trump Administration's aggressive and dangerous enforcement agenda. The FAA has an obligation to ensure these operations do not occur beyond the reach of safety standards, transparency, and accountability. We urge you to swiftly bring these operations into the light and work with Congress to ensure oversight of ICE's air operations.

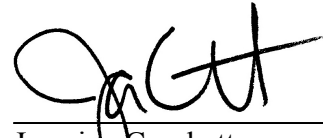
Thank you for your attention to this matter. Families deserve to know where their loved ones are and if they're safe. The public deserves transparency. And every passenger onboard ICE flights deserves human and safe treatment.

We look forward to reviewing your prompt response.

Sincerely,



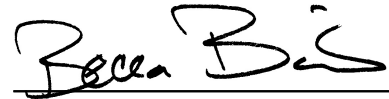
Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



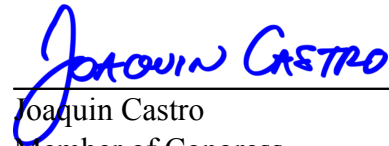
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



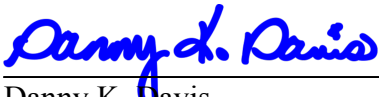
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



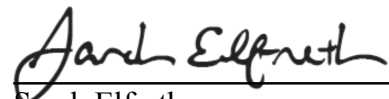
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



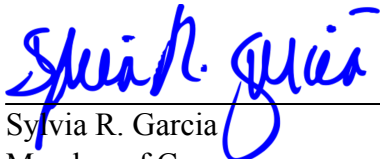
Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



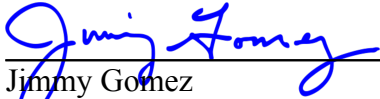
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



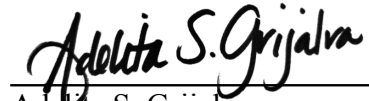
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



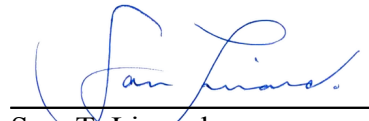
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Julie Johnson
Member of Congress



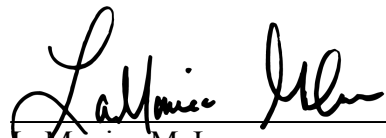
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



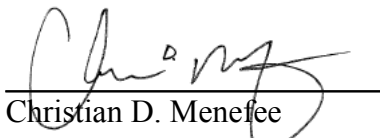
Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



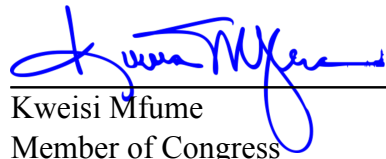
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



Christian D. Menefee
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



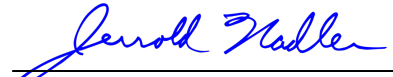
Dave Min
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



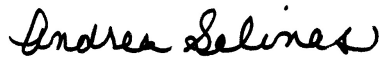
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



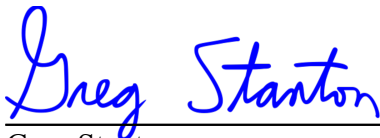
Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



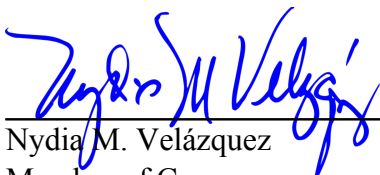
Dina Titus
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Rashida Tlaib
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Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
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